



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Testimony in Support of LD 2051: An Act to Ensure Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Maine

January 14, 2026

To the Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

We are grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of LD 2051. The Portland Public Schools strongly endorses this critically important legislation, which would ensure that certain lawfully present immigrants who will lose federal eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) remain eligible for state-funded benefits in Maine.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has estimated that as many as 2,000 Mainers would lose their access to essential SNAP benefits as a result of federal actions. Here in Portland, DHHS reported a decrease in 800 individuals accessing SNAP benefits between July and December 2025. While we hope that some of these people no longer require benefits because they are experiencing improved food security, we know from our own experience and that of our community partners that this lack of access to federal assistance has only pushed more people to rely on other sources for their basic nutrition needs, including schools and food banks.

As education leaders, we see every day the critical role that food security plays in a child's ability to learn, grow, and thrive. When families have reliable access to nutritious food, students come to school healthier, more focused, and better prepared to succeed academically and socially. Conversely, when families are excluded from food assistance programs, the effects are immediate and harmful—especially for children. Food insecurity is linked to increased absenteeism, behavioral challenges, lower academic achievement, and long-term health consequences. It places additional strain on schools and educators, who work tirelessly to meet students' basic needs while also delivering high-quality instruction. Excluding certain families from SNAP does not reduce need—it simply shifts the burden onto children, schools, local communities, and emergency food systems.

Ensuring that all families who need it have access to SNAP is both a moral imperative and a sound public policy choice. Policies that restrict access to nutrition assistance undermine educational equity and run counter to our shared goal of supporting Maine's children and future workforce. LD 2051 affirms the fundamental principle that no one should go hungry

because of circumstances beyond their control. We urge the Legislature to pass this bill and reaffirm Maine's commitment to the health, dignity, and well-being of all families.

We respectfully submit this on behalf of the Public and Legislative Affairs Committee of the Portland Public Schools Board of Education.

Respectfully,

Sarah Lentz
Chair

Jayne Sawtelle
Board Member

Fatuma Noor
Board Member

Ali Ali
Board Member

Ryan Scallon
Superintendent